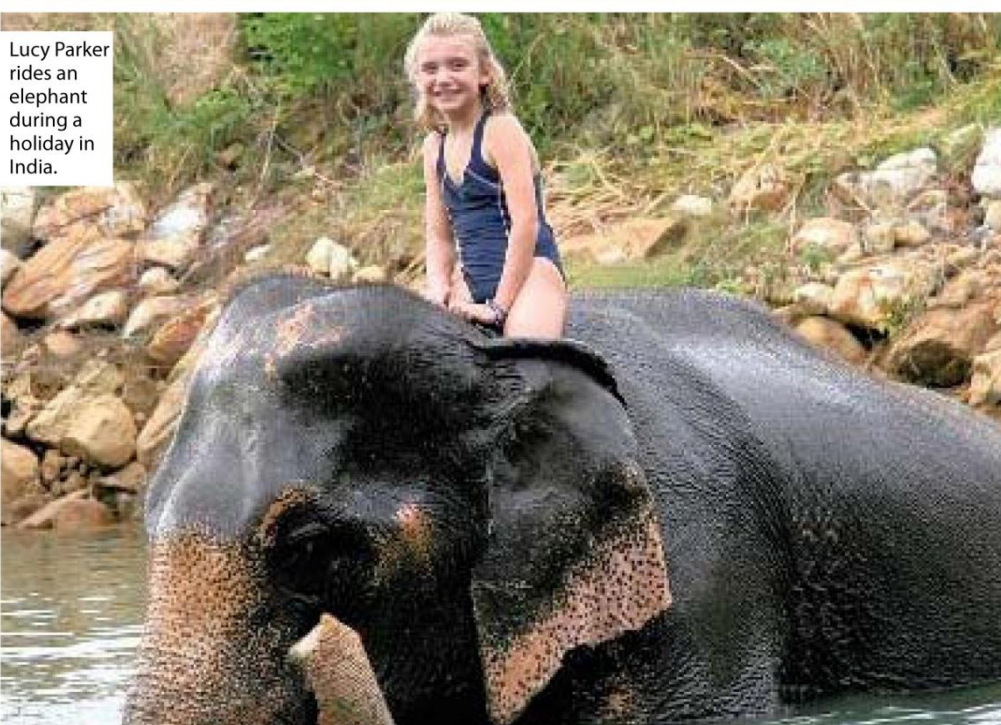


Elephant ride

dream comes

true for Lucy

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Lucy Parker rides an elephant during a holiday in India.

Girl was told she'd never stand up straight

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A GIRL told she would never stand up straight again has defied doctors to realise her dream of riding an elephant.

Twelve-year-old Lucy Parker, from Balsall Heath, was left with a curved spine after being diagnosed with the serious back condition scoliosis four years ago.

She faced the prospect of undergoing major spinal fusion surgery, where metal rods are inserted either side of the spine, before it is fused solid in a ten-hour operation.

"I lost interest in everything and I was so worried about doing anything that I thought

may hurt my back," said Lucy, who hopes to be a vet when she grows up.

In a desperate attempt to find an alternative, the schoolgirl and her parents Val and Thomas scoured the internet and discovered Scoliosis SOS.

Founded and run by fellow scoliosis sufferer Erika Maude, the London clinic opened seven years ago and has helped hundreds with non-surgical treatments for the condition.

Lucy was booked on to a four-week treatment course and exercise programme – and her family were overwhelmed by the results.

Her condition is now under control and she no longer needs major spinal surgery.

"I feel like myself again," Lucy said.

"I really felt like my world had fallen apart and I didn't know how to cope with all the emotions that were going around in my head.

"The exercises I learnt were not too difficult, it was just about staying motivated.

"But just the thought of being normal again was enough. It helped me to push myself and get some amazing results."

The treatment also helped Lucy achieve her dream of riding an elephant on a family holiday in India.

"Riding an elephant was the most fantastic experience of my life," she said.

"It was amazing to be so close to such an awesome animal. It has made me want to be a vet even more and I am so excited to get back to being normal."